

General Management Plan Newsletter

Fall 2001

"At Saratoga, the British campaign that was supposed to crush America's rebellion ended instead in a surrender that changed the history of the world."

--Richard Ketchum, author of *Saratoga*

Setting a New Course

The National Park Service (NPS) is preparing a general management plan for Saratoga National Historical Park. This "master plan" will provide guidance for management decisions that affect park resources and visitor experiences over the next 20 years.

Making Progress

Last year, planners began gathering ideas from interested citizens about how best to manage Saratoga NHP. The planning team held two public meetings and published the first planning newsletter to get the word out about the plan and to get feedback from the public. The public input received helped the planners shape several preliminary management alternatives, which are featured in the ["The Preliminary Alternatives"](#) section. Each alternative offers its approach to resource management and visitor experience. Public input and discussion of these preliminary alternatives will help the National Park Service team learn what the public desires for the future of the park.

During the next few months, the planning team will refine and revise the preliminary alternatives and present these alternatives in a draft plan that will be available for public review for several months next summer. In the draft plan, the National Park Service will identify one of the management alternatives (or a combination of proposals from each) as being the "preferred" alternative. The selection of the "preferred" alternative will be guided by an analysis of Saratoga NHP's cultural and natural resources, and by an evaluation of the effects the differing management alternatives might have on irreplaceable assets. The National Park Service will also take into consideration the input received from concerned citizens. So, please share your thoughts with us!

This newsletter is produced by the planning team for
the Saratoga National Historical Park general management staff

Goals

Goals articulate the ideal conditions that park management is striving to attain in perpetuity. In short, the goals assert the ideals that Saratoga NHP is protected, that the park visitors are satisfied and knowledgeable, and that the park works with others to foster stewardship. Following are the goals for Saratoga NHP.

Resource Management

- Park managers protect, preserve and maintain in good condition the landscapes, buildings, structures, archeological sites, artifacts, archives, and monuments and historic markers that are significant to the outcome and commemoration of the Burgoyne Campaign.
- Saratoga National Historical Park contributes to the accumulation of knowledge and understanding of cultural and natural resources related to the site's historical significance and to its ecological importance in the Hudson River Valley.

- Park professionals manage the park's natural resources in the context of a cultural park to encourage biological diversity, to foster healthy ecosystems, and to avoid adverse impacts on the broader ecosystem.

Visitor Use and Interpretation

- The public understands and appreciates the sacred and commemorative nature of the park's landscape and the significance of the military events that took place here on the outcome of the American Revolution and the consequent impact on world political developments.
- Saratoga National Historical Park provides quality interpretive and educational programs that make the park's stories and resources available to a wide range of audiences. Interpretation fosters opportunities for visitors to make emotional and intellectual connections with the meaning inherent in those stories and resources.
- Visitors safely enjoy a variety of educational and recreational experiences accessible to all segments of the population. Appropriate recreational activities take place in locations and at levels that ensure the long-term protection of the park's natural and cultural resources.

Cooperative Efforts and Partnerships

- Saratoga National Historical Park establishes partnerships in order to develop educational programs and to foster stewardship of park resources and values both within and beyond park boundaries.

The Mission: To Preserve and Protect

Park Purpose

Saratoga National Historical Park preserves and protects the battlefield and the sites associated with the 1777 surrender of British forces at Saratoga, which was a decisive event in the winning of American independence, and interprets these and other sites, events, and people related to the military campaigns in the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.

Park Significance

Honors the participants and preserves the battlegrounds where a major British military offensive in 1777 ended in a surrender that heartened the patriot cause and brought about the international recognition and aid essential to securing our nation's freedom.

Contains the estate of General Philip Schuyler, an outstanding figure during the revolutionary period and commander of the northern theater of operations between 1775 and 1777.

Presents a richly-monumented landscape significant in the early commemorative movement to build a shared American identity.

The Stories to be Told at Saratoga

The park staff has been working with planners and partners to articulate the most important stories to be told at the park -- the interpretive themes. The themes express the key concepts that characterize the park resources. The themes are conceptual, rather than a simple listing of important topics or a chronology of events.

Place: Grand Strategy and Victory for the New Nation

In 1777, the second year of America's War for Independence, the British sought to quell the rebellion with a single decisive military campaign. Their plan depended on using an invading army to divide the colonies along a natural corridor

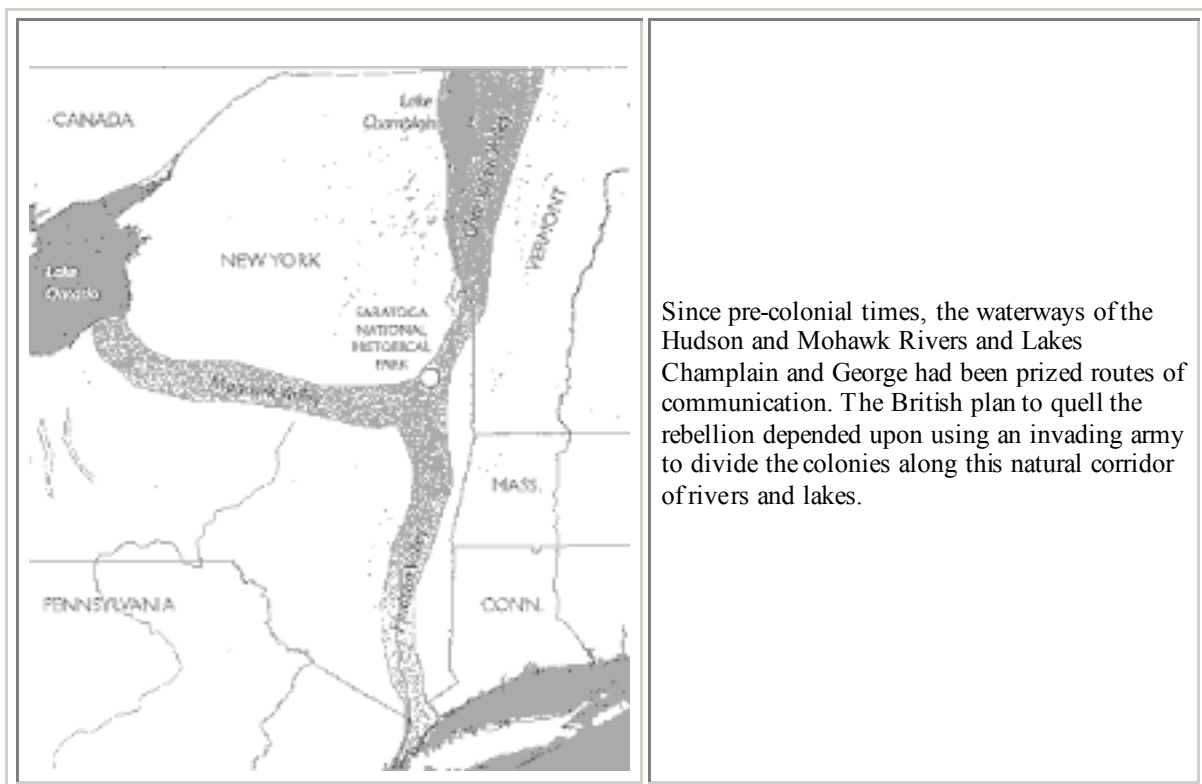
of rivers and lakes stretching from Canada to New York City. The American commitment to halt this invasion at Saratoga proved critical to the future of an emerging nation.

- The Americans' determined resistance at Saratoga, coupled with British strategic blunders, resulted in a stunning defeat and surrender for a British army. This timely victory reversed American military fortunes, boosted patriot morale, and gained them international recognition and support, including vital naval and military assistance.
- The defensive position south of Saratoga, at Bemis Heights, was chosen because the natural terrain there afforded the Americans tactical advantages. Their skillful use of the high ground, narrow river passageway, and wooded ravines fortified with entrenchments and batteries, forced the British army to fight the battles on terms favorable to the Americans.
- Since pre-colonial times, the waterways of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers and Lakes Champlain and George had been prized natural routes of communication, trade, and warfare – highly coveted by those seeking control of this vast inland area for its rich natural resources and arable land.

People: at Saratoga -- By Choice or By Chance

Today, the winning of American independence seems to have been inevitable. But it was actually the result of many individual decisions and sacrifices made by people from all walks of life. Their determination in surmounting overwhelming odds was an early example of what is recognized now as the American spirit – the will and ability to shape a better future.

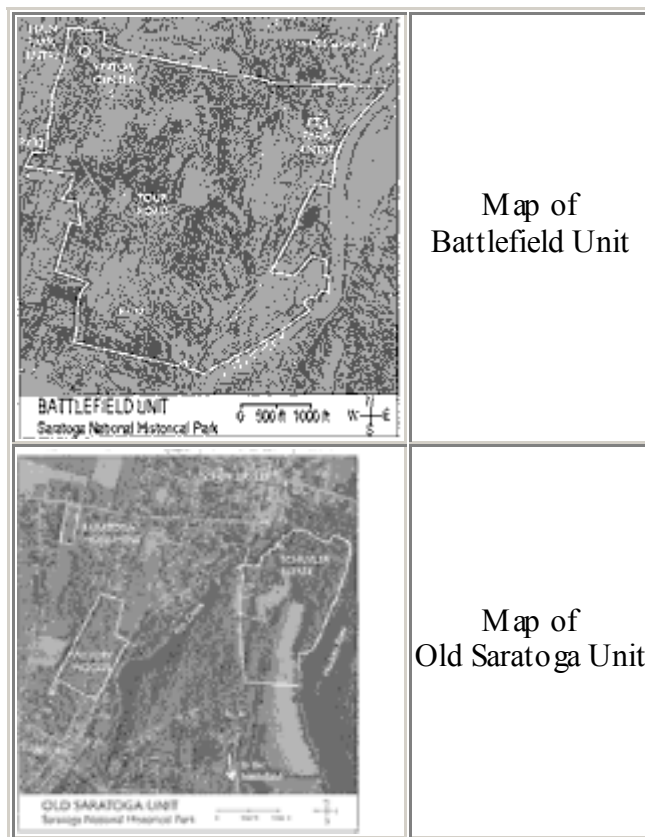
- Participants on both sides of the conflict – men and women, soldier and civilian, free and enslaved, and those of many nations -- were motivated by hopes and aspirations, including reasons of personal or monetary gain, continuance of established ways of life, desire for a better future, or belief in a moral cause.
- General Philip Schuyler, patriot statesman and military leader, risked his life and livelihood and lost his Saratoga home for his belief in the promise of a new and independent United States of America, affording political and economic liberties for its citizens.



Memory: Creating a Shared American Identity

Monuments and memorials added to Saratoga's "Sacred Ground" represent early national efforts to honor those who died or were wounded in service to their country and the causes for which they made their sacrifices. The park and its monuments and historic markers contribute to a shared American identity and evolving sense of patriotism.

- The Saratoga Monument stands prominently within the British camp where the decision to surrender was made in October 1777. The site symbolizes the decisive turn in the American struggle for independence and serves as an eternal reminder of the human cost of both the American victory and the British defeat.
- A leader of the Saratoga Monument Association, Ellen Hardin Walworth's efforts to commemorate the Saratoga battles marked the beginning of her lifelong commitment to preserving the icons of our national identity and the creation of local, state, and national organizations to achieve those goals.



Issues Facing the Park

Since the completion of the 1969 Master Plan, a number of significant changes in park resources, visitor use patterns, and community development initiatives have occurred. The Master Plan no longer adequately addresses the policy and operational issues facing Saratoga NHP. The public, planning team, and park staff have raised many issues that have been considered in the development of the preliminary alternatives. The following planning issues provide insight into some of the challenges now facing the park.

The park is composed of four non-contiguous sites that are not well linked or integrated.

Saratoga NHP is composed of four non-contiguous sites. The Battlefield Unit is located in Stillwater and is what many people think of as the park. The Old Saratoga Unit, in the villages of Schuylerville and Victory, contains the Schuyler Estate, the Saratoga Monument, and Victory Woods, a 22-acre wooded tract locally known as the Garber Tract. When the park's Master Plan was approved in 1969, neither the Saratoga Monument nor Victory Woods were part of the park. As a result of these essentially unplanned additions, the park does not function as a cohesive entity. The four sites have not

been well integrated or linked, and orientation to the sites is limited. Park visitors have difficulty finding their way among the three sites that are open to the public.

Victory Woods is part of the park, but is not available to visitors or interpreted.

Victory Woods was added to the park in the 1960s through a donation by its owners. It has never been available to visitors and no programs or interpretive services are offered there. At the outset of this planning process, the historical significance of Victory Woods was unclear and the future of the property was in question. Preliminary research conducted in support of this planning effort indicates that Victory Woods contains remnants of the British fortified camp. The site appears to have changed little since 1777 and may contain archeological resources of value. The general management plan must address the treatment and use of this parcel.

The park's formal sense of entry has been lost.

With the creation of the Northway (I-87), the primary gateway to the park has been changed from the Route 4 entrance to the Route 32 "rear entrance" by the park's maintenance facilities and administrative offices. As a result, the sense of formal entry is lost. In addition, highway signs to accommodate the new national cemetery now send visitors travelling south on the Northway to the Schuyler Estate rather than to the battlefield. These visitors often do not receive orientation or an overview of the park interpretive themes until well into their sojourn at the park.

Interpretation along the tour road is weak.

The battlefield tour road is the primary visitor experience, yet interpretation along the tour road is weak. The current sequencing and location of interpretive stops leads to confusion and makes understanding the relationship of events quite difficult. In its current configuration, visitors on the battlefield tour road cannot trace the battlefield action in any logical or chronological order. Moreover, few visual clues exist in the landscape to help visitors understand troop movements. Without supporting interpretation, such as guided tours, visitors find it difficult to "read" the landscape. The general management plan must examine ways to reduce visitor confusion and improve understanding of the park's interpretive themes.

Visitor amenities are deficient

The park's visitor center is undersized and outmoded, and fails to meet current visitor orientation and interpretive needs. In addition, facilities to support fee collection and special events are lacking. The general management plan must determine if additional facilities are needed to provide adequate visitor services.

Opportunities exist to link the park with thematically related properties outside of the boundary.

A number of related historic properties remain outside the park's boundary, such as the Marshall House (private) and the Field of Grounded Arms (municipal). The general management plan needs to consider cooperative strategies for recognition and interpretation of these sites.

Opportunities exist to participate in regional heritage initiatives.

Opportunities exist for the park to participate in a number of new regional cultural heritage initiatives. For example, local and state officials are working to develop the historic and recreational potential in Schuylerville, and the park is a partner in the Saratoga County Heritage Trail System and the Lakes to Locks Passage initiative. Additionally, the park is located within the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, and is near (and thematically related to) the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. It is also within the study area of the Champlain Valley Heritage Corridor Project. The general management plan must consider an appropriate role for the park in these initiatives.

Preservation treatment for the Schuyler Estate is unresolved.

A number of management issues have yet to be appropriately addressed for the Schuyler Estate, including preservation treatment, interpretation, and visitor use. Research related to the historic development of the property is nearing completion. The planning team will use this information to determine the appropriate treatments of the property.

The Preliminary Management Alternatives

The planning team developed the following alternatives in response to public input, the park's legislation, the conditions of park resources, the park purpose and significance, the park's goals, and the planning issues. After examining this information, the team determined that there were two subject areas where visions for the future of the park differed substantially: 1) visitor experience and 2) external factors. Public participants' visions of how visitors should move through the park and how they should be presented with information varied widely. Also, people had different views regarding the appropriate level of park participation in the numerous regional initiatives that are being undertaken in the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys. The planning team used these two, broad "decision points" as the basis for developing alternative approaches to park management.

Alternative A: Continuation of Current Practices

Concept

This approach allows for limited incremental actions to enhance park management with minimum change to the park's current management philosophy and physical conditions.

Highlights

- Under this alternative, visitors would begin their experience at the existing Visitor Center via an improved Route 32 entryway.
- The exhibits in the visitor center would be reworked and improved and would provide orientation and information about all park sites.
- The driving tour route of the battlefield would continue to be the primary visitor experience. Park managers would upgrade interpretive media and restore key views at tour road stops to help the visitor better understand the logistics and chronology of the battles.
- Alternative driving tour routes of varying lengths that would allow visitors an opportunity to tour the battlefield in smaller increments without having to commit to a full nine-mile journey would also be considered.
- In certain areas of the park, the pattern of open land and woodlands would be managed to suggest the conditions at the time of the second battle. This would improve, to some degree, the ability of visitors to "read" the landscape and understand key aspects of the battles.
- The three sites in Schuylerville and Victory (Old Saratoga Unit) --the Schuyler Estate, the Saratoga Monument, and Victory Woods-- would be open to the public and interpreted as staffing allows.
- Park managers would continue to conduct research on Victory Woods to find out more about its resources and would develop a self-guided interpretive trail through the property.
- Park managers would try to participate in regional initiatives to the extent possible with existing resources.

Alternative B: Focus on the Battles, Siege, and Surrender of 1777

Concept

This approach focuses on improving the visitor understanding of the events that led to the 1777 British surrender of troops by providing a more complete and logical depiction of these events. This concept also enables park staff to work with other Revolutionary War sites in developing outreach initiatives.

Highlights

- Under this alternative, visitors would enter the park through the formal Route 4 entrance, and begin their experience at the existing Visitor Center, which would be improved and expanded.
- The driving tour route would continue to be the primary visitor experience. The tour route, however, would be modified to follow a sequence that unfolds in a logical fashion, and that follows the progression of the battles, siege, and surrender. Accordingly, after orientation at the expanded Visitor Center, the visitor tour would start in Bemis Heights and end in Old Saratoga.
- Interpretation of the military events would rely heavily on direct physical contact with the landscape, which would look similar to the way it did at the time of the second battle, to the extent possible. In key park areas, NPS would rehabilitate the pattern of open land and woodlands, physically depict the locations of battle-era structures (such as the Taylor House and the Bemis Tavern), indicate locations of battle-era roads and field fortifications, and portray features characteristic of encampments, such as tree stumps, log piles, and fire pits. A similar treatment would be pursued for Victory Woods.
- NPS would provide general orientation to the Old Saratoga sites in a new visitor orientation facility developed at an appropriate location in Old Saratoga, perhaps near the Schuyler Estate.
- All three Old Saratoga sites would be open to the public on a seasonal basis and linked via pedestrian and auto routes. These routes could be coordinated with the walking tour that is currently being developed in Schuylerville and include the thematically related sites outside of the park boundary. The NPS could work with partners to develop media to interpret the sites on the auto and pedestrian routes.
- Under this alternative, an expanded park staff would seek to enhance existing partnerships with other Revolutionary War sites associated with the Burgoyne Campaign in the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.

Alternative C: *Present the Park as Memorial Grounds*

Concept

This approach presents the park as "sacred ground" that has been commemorated in numerous ways over generations, from the erection of monuments, to the establishment of state and federal parkland, to contemporary efforts to link associated sites through regional initiatives. This alternative expands the park's interpretive focus to embrace, in addition to the military events, the efforts of successive generations to memorialize these events. Moreover, this alternative envisions the park as an important gateway/interpretive link with the regional initiatives of the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.

Highlights

- Unlike the other alternatives, the visitor experience would begin in Old Saratoga and end at the battlefield in Stillwater. NPS would explore the feasibility of joining state, local, and other partners in establishing a new year-round visitor center developed at an appropriate location in or near Old Saratoga. In cooperation with regional partners, NPS would place the military events of 1777 in the wider context of the Revolutionary War actions in the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys. Classroom space and community meeting space could also be provided at this facility.
- Park managers would open all the Old Saratoga sites to the public on a seasonal basis. As in Alternative B, the Old Saratoga sites would be linked by pedestrian and auto routes, which could be coordinated with the Schuylerville walking trail and include the thematically related sites outside of the park boundaries.
- At the battlefield, the existing visitor center would be retained but redesigned to serve as a battlefield orientation center and would contain exhibits that provide an overview and interpret the military tactics and logistics of the battles.

- Although the driving tour route would continue to be the primary visitor experience, stops along the tour route would not necessarily be based on the progression of battle events. Rather than focus on military actions, the battlefield experience would be more contemplative in nature. The stops would offer reflective messages that are evocative of battle experiences from such varying perspectives as women who were camp followers, children of nearby farmers who found themselves caught in revolutionary struggles, and the Indian forces who participated in the battles.
- Alternative modes of park touring, such as biking and hiking would be actively encouraged. For example, bicycles may be available to visitors at the park and the park's trail system would be extended to facilitate non-motorized access to interpretive locations.
- NPS would present the battlefield landscape largely as it appears today, except key vistas important to interpretation would be returned. A similar landscape treatment would be pursued for Victory Woods.
- This alternative would rely heavily upon successful partnerships, especially with those involved in regional initiatives. An expanded park staff, in partnership with regional organizations, would seek to inform the visitor of the Revolutionary War events in the Champlain-Hudson and Mohawk valleys.

Common to All Alternatives

Regardless of which alternative is ultimately chosen and implemented, numerous objectives for management will be applicable to the park as a whole. For example, under all alternatives, park managers will strive to: base decisions on the best available scientific information, promote biodiversity and foster healthy ecosystems, improve efficiency of park operations, manage visitor traffic to prevent resource impairment and/or loss, and make park operations as environmentally sustainable as possible. In addition to presenting alternatives that differ from one another, the general management plan will also address objectives that are common to all alternatives for resource management, visitor use and experience, and cooperative efforts and partnerships.

Next Steps

Next, the planning team will review the comments received on this newsletter, collect and analyze resource information, and refine the preliminary alternatives. The team will present the revised management alternatives in a draft plan that will be on public review for several months next summer -- 2002. The team will incorporate these comments in its final plan, which is scheduled for completion in 2003.

Feedback: Your ideas are important

Let us know what you think. Please fill out the mail back form below and fax it or mail it to the park. Or call, send a fax, write a letter, or e-mail your thoughts and suggestions to the planning team. Please include your name and address. Send your comments to:

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Mail Back Form

Please let us know what you think of the preliminary alternatives. Share your thoughts by e-mail, or by filling out this form and faxing or mailing it to us. Please see our contact information below. Thank you!

Name:

Address:

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of **Alternative A:** Continuation of Current Practices?

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of **Alternative B:** Focus on the Battles, Siege, and Surrender?

What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of **Alternative C:** Present the Park as Memorial Grounds?

Please share your comments:

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